

It was in the schoolhouse, in the late evening of Tuesday, the 4th of Dhu'l-Qa'da, A.H. 545, that the Shaikh (may Allah be well pleased with him) said:

O young man! Give priority to the hereafter over this world, because you will then gain both of them together. If you give this world priority over the hereafter, you will lose both of them together, as your punishment for having preoccupied yourself with something you were not put in charge of. If you do not concern yourself with this world, Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) will assist you to cope with it. He will provide you with the facility [tawfiq] and the opportunity to take from it, and when you do take something from it, it will be with His blessing [baraka].

The believer [mu'min] works for both his worldly and his otherworldly interests. For his worldly efforts he receives to the extent of his need. He is satisfied with the equivalent of a traveler's provisions; he does not obtain a great deal. The ignorant fool [jahil] is wholly concerned with this world. The ascetic ['azif] is wholly concerned with the hereafter and then the Master.

If you happen to have acquired a whole loaf of this world, and your lower self [nafs] is fighting for control and your desires are making demands, then is the time to look after those who cannot get even a slice. There is no salvation [falah] for you, until you despise your lower self and take up arms against it on the side of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He).

The champions of truth [as-siddiqun] can recognize one another. Each one of them picks up the scent of acceptance and truthfulness [sidq] from the another. O you who turn away from the Lord of Truth (Glorious and Exalted is He) and from the champions of truth among His servants, devoting yourselves to fellow creatures and associating with them, how long will your devotion to them last? What good can they do you? They have no power to harm or benefit, to give or to withhold. There is no difference between them and inanimate objects as far as harm and benefit are concerned. The King [al-Malik] is One. The Injurer [ad-Zarr] is One. The Benefactor [an-Nafi'] is One. The Mover [al-Muharrik] and the Bringer-to-Rest [al-Musakkin] is One. The Controller [al-Musallit] is One. The Subjugator [al-Musakhkhir] is One. The Giver [al-Mu'ti] is One. The Withholder [al-Mani'] is One. The Creator [al-Khaliq] and the Sustainer [ar-Raziq] is Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He). He is the Everlasting from All Eternity to All Eternity [al-Qadim al-Azali al-Abadi]. He is Existant [Mawjud] before the creation, before your fathers and your mothers and your rich folk. He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, of all they contain and of what lies between them.

There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing. (42:11)

How unfortunate for you, O creatures of Allah, that you do not really know your Creator! If there would be something to my credit with Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) at the Resurrection, I would surely bear the burdens of you all, from the first of you to the last of you. O reciter of the Qur'an [muqri'], recite to me alone, away from the people of the heavens and the earth!

Whenever someone puts his knowledge into practice, it becomes a doorway between him and Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He), through which his heart enters into His presence. As for you, O learned one, you are preoccupied with idle gossip and accumulating wealth, instead of putting your knowledge into practice, so you will surely possess only the outer form [sura] of it, without the inner content [ma'na]. When Allah (Exalted is He) wishes one of His servants well, He teaches him, then He inspires him [alhamahu] to practice [what he has learned] and to do so with sincere devotion [ikhlas]. He draws him close and brings him near to Himself, informs him and instructs him in the knowledge of the heart and the innermost being, singling him out for special favor. He selects him as He selected Moses (peace be upon him), to whom He said:

I have fashioned you for Myself. (20:41)

"Not for anything other than Me. Not for passions and pleasures and vanities. Not for the earth and not for the heavens. Not for Paradise and not for the Fire [of Hell]. Not for dominion [mulk] and not for damnation [hulk]. Nothing shall keep you from Me. No other interest shall hold your attention apart from Me. No image [sura] shall distract you from Me, and no created object [khaliqa] shall block you off from Me. No desire of the flesh [shahwa] shall satisfy you as a substitute for Me."

O young man! Do not despair of the mercy of Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) because of any sin you have committed, but wash away the dirt from the garment of your religion [din] with the water of repentance [tawba], of sustained and sincere repentance. Then perfume and disinfect that garment with the fragrance of direct experience [ma'rifa]. Beware of this situation you are in at present, because whichever way you turn there are beasts of prey all around you, and harmful influences are at work upon you. Extricate yourself from it, and restore your heart to the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). Do not live to suit your natural impulses [tab'], your lust [shahwa] and your passion [hawa], but to meet the standards of two impartial witnesses [shahidan 'adlan], namely the Book [of Allah] and the Sunna [of the Prophet]. Then look for two other witnesses, namely your heart and the working [fi'l] of Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He). If the Book, the Sunna and your heart have given you permission, wait for the fourth, meaning the working of Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He). Do not be like one who gathers wood at night, who gathers without knowing what he may be picking up. [Wait] for it to be Creator-and-creature [al-Khaliq wa'l-khalq]. This is not something that comes with self-flattery, wishful

thinking, affectation and artificiality. Rather is it something that resides within the breast [sadr], and is confirmed by work ['amal]. Which work? The work that is done for the sake of Allah (Exalted is He).

O young man! Good health lies in giving up the quest for good health. Affluence lies in giving up the quest for affluence. The remedy lies in giving up the quest for the remedy. The whole of the remedy consists in submission [taslim] to the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), in cutting material ties [asbab] and repudiating overlords [arbab] as far as your heart is concerned. The remedy lies in affirmation of the Oneness of Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) with the heart, not with the tongue alone. The affirmation of Oneness [tawhid] and abstinence [zuhd] are not incumbent on the body and the tongue. The affirmation of Oneness must be in the heart. Abstinence must be in the heart. Pious devotion [taqwa] must be in the heart. Direct experience [ma'rifa] must be in the heart. Knowledge ['ilm] of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) must be in the heart. Love [mahabba] of Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) must be in the heart, and nearness [qurb] to Him must be in the heart.

Be sensible. Do not be foolish. Do not behave artificially or in an affected manner. Your present condition is one of foolishness, artificiality, affectation, falsehood, pretense and hypocrisy. Your sole concern is getting people to notice you. Do you not realize that every step you take with your heart toward creatures is a step away from the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He)? You claim to be a seeker of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), when you are really a seeker of creatures. Your likeness is that of someone who says he wishes to proceed to Mecca, then goes off in the direction of Khurasan and so gets farther away from Mecca. You claim that your heart has become detached from creatures, when you actually fear them and pin your hopes on them. Your outer show [zahir] is abstinence, but your inner reality [batin] is appetite [raghba]. Your outer show is the Truth [al-Haqq], but your inner reality is the creation [al-khalq].

This business is not accomplished by wagging the tongue. This state of being [hala] has no room in it for creatures, for this world or the hereafter, or for anything at all apart from Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He). He is Single [wahid] and He accepts only what is single. He is Single and accepts no partner, for He is in charge of your business. You must accept what you are told. Creatures are powerless to cause you injury or bring you benefit; in such matters they are merely instruments of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). He may deal with you and with them as He sees fit. The pen has run dry on Allah's knowledge (Almighty and Glorious is He) of what is due to you and what you owe.

The righteous affirmers of Unity [al-muwahhidun as-salihun] are Allah's evidence [hujja] against the rest of His creatures. Some of them divest themselves of this world both outwardly and inwardly, while some of them divest themselves of it only insofar as their inner is concerned. The

Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) sees no trace of it on their inner beings. These are the pure hearts [al-qulub as-safiya]. When someone is capable of this, he is granted the dominion of creatures. He is the valiant hero [ash-shuja' al-batal]. The hero is he who purifies his heart of all that is apart from Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) and stands at His gate with the sword [saif] of the affirmation of Unity and the finely wrought blade [samsama] of the sacred law [shar'], allowing no created thing to enter into His presence. He connects his heart [qalb] to the Transformer of hearts [Muqallib al-qulub].

The sacred law gives training to the outer. The affirmation of Unity and gnosis [ma'rifa] give training to the inner. Hey you there! Nothing comes out of "they said..., and we said..." You say: "This is unlawful [haram]," yet you are committing it. You say: "This is lawful [halal]," yet you neither do it nor apply it. You are stupidity within stupidity. The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

Woe to the ignorant person one time, and to the learned person seven times.

One woe to the ignorant person for not knowing, and woe to this scholar seven times over, because he knows and does not act ['alima wa-ma 'amila]. The blessedness [baraka] of knowledge is taken away from him, while its value as evidence [hujja] against him remains. You must study and then practice. Then withdraw into your private space [khalwa] away from creatures, and devote yourself to the love [mahabba] of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). When you have genuinely achieved such solitary devotion and love, He will draw you toward Himself, bring you close to Himself and absorb you into Himself. Then, if Allah so wishes, He will make you famous and put you on public display, and send you back to fulfill your destiny [aqsam]. He will give orders to the wind of His predestination [sabiqa] and His foreknowledge ['ilm] concerning you, so it will blow against the walls of your private place and throw them down. He will make your business known to His creatures, so you will be among them on His account, not on your own account. You will receive your allotted shares [aqsam] in full, but free from the bad influences of the self [nafs], natural impulse [tab'] and desire [hawa]. He will return you to [the fulfillment of] your destiny so that the principle [qanun] of His foreknowledge concerning you shall not be annulled. You will experience all that has been allotted to you, while your heart remains with the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Hear and become aware, O ignorant ones, of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) and His saints [awliya']. O you who disparage the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) and His saints! The truth is the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), and falsehood is you, O creatures. The truth [al-haqq] resides in the hearts [qulub], the innermost beings [asrar] and the spiritual contents [ma'ani], while falsehood [al-batil] resides in the lower selves [nufus], the passions

[ahwiya], the natural impulses [tiba'], the habitual modes of behavior ['adat], the ways of the world and all that is apart from the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He).

This heart cannot prosper until it is connected to the close presence of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), the Everlasting from All Eternity [al-Qadim al-Azali], the Enduring for All Eternity [ad-Da'im al-Abadi]. Do not try to compete, O hypocrite, for you have nothing better than this. You are the slave ['abd] of your bread and butter and your candies, of your clothes and your horse and your worldly authority. The sincere heart [al-qalb as-sadiq] travels away from creatures toward the Creator. When it sees things along the way, it salutes them and passes by.

Those men of learning who put their learning into practice [al-'ulama' al-'amiluna bi-'ilmihim] are the deputies of the venerable forefathers [nuwwab as-salaf]. They are the heirs [waratha] of the Prophets [al-anbiya'] and the remnants of the worthy successors [al-khalaf]. They are paraded before these noble predecessors, who command them to build constructively in the city [madina] of the sacred law [shar'], and forbid them to let it go to ruin. They shall be assembled on the Day of Resurrection, they and the Prophets (peace be upon them) together, to receive their reward in full from their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He).

As for the scholar who does not put his knowledge into practice, Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) has compared him to a donkey, for He has said:

Their likeness is as the likeness of a donkey carrying tomes. (62:5)

The "tomes" [asfar] are the books of knowledge. Can a donkey derive any benefit from such books? It gets nothing from them but a weary burden and fatigue. When a person acquires more knowledge, he must also acquire more fear of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and greater obedience to Him. O you who lay claim to knowledge, where is your connection with the fear of Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He)? Where are your caution and your dread? Where is your acknowledgment of your sins? Where is your link with the light in the darkness, through obedience to Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He)? Where is your self-discipline, your struggle with the self and your hostility against it on the side of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He)? The only things you aspire to are the robe and the turban, food and sexual intercourse, houses and shops, spending time with people and enjoying their company. Turn your attention away from all of these things, because if any share in them is destined for you, it will come to you in its own good time. Meanwhile, your heart can be relieved of the strain of anticipation and the burden of greed, residing with the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). So why exhaust yourself over something that requires no effort?

O young man! Your seclusion [from the world] is corrupt, not genuine. It is polluted, not purified. What am I to do with you? In your heart there is no genuine affirmation of Unity [tawhid], no true sincerity [ikhlas]. O sleepy ones who are not sleepily neglected! O rejecters who are not rejected! O forgetful ones who are not forgotten! O abandoners who are not abandoned! O you who are ignorant of Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) and His Messenger (Allah bless him and give him peace) and those who came in earlier or later times, you are like sawn-off lengths of wood that are fit for no useful purpose!

Our Lord, give us in this world good, and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire! (2:201)

Al-Fath ar-Rabbani (13th Discourse) - Abdul Qadir al-Jilani